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Turner says CIA is not interfering in Iran affairs

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The director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency denied Thursday the CIA plays a role in Iran's internal affairs but said the agency acted correctly 26 years ago when it helped overthrow the Iranian government.

Adm. Stansfield Turner, appointed head of the CIA by President Jimmy Carter in March 1977, spoke at an Ohio State University press conference prior to an evening campus lecture.

THE NIGHT BEFORE, in a similar appearance on the University of Kentucky campus in Lexington, 12 persons were arrested when angry Iranian students protested what they termed a CIA effort to keep the shah of Iran in power.

Also Wednesday, angry Iranians marched from OSU to the Statehouse to protest what they called the shah's oppressive regime, claiming his police and troops gunned down 500 Iranian citizens at one city last January.

About the CIA's role in overthrowing the government of then-prime minister Mossadegh, Turner said, "There is no question this country fully supported that activity in 1952."

"I STILL THINK it was a good thing to do that, myself."

Why?

There was a long pause before Turner's answer. He characterized Mossadegh as a communist and his leadership as "the imposition of a communist government on a free society."

WHAT ABOUT claims Mossadegh's government was popular with the people and that his decision to nationalize foreign oil interests had more to do with the CIA decision to overthrow him?

There was a still longer pause, but Turner replied such a summary of events "may be stretching the point."

He said anyone who travels extensively in Iran can testify "it's very easy to see the marked difference in opportunity for the people."

IN HIS OPINION, he said, the shah's government is less oppressive than Mossadegh's.

Turner denied the CIA is playing any role in Iran's internal affairs, pointing to what he called "strict controls" on CIA interference with foreign governments, a service he said the CIA performs for the federal government "on demand" rather than initiating it.

He said it is "absolutely untrue" the CIA is cooperating in reprisals against dissidents by the shah's secret service, which Middle East experts claim was created with CIA aid.

ON OTHER ISSUES, Turner said he cannot comment on reports that a nuclear spying device was planted in India by the CIA and now threatens to poison Indian rivers.

"I just can't comment on that kind of operation," Turner said, "lest we mislead people."

He said the fact the claim appeared in Outside, published by Rolling Stone magazine, "doesn't really give it the touch of authority which gives me leave to comment on it."

Turner said he likewise cannot comment on Soviet claims the CIA is holding Arkady N. Shevchenko under duress. The Russian official disappeared from the United Nations in New York late last week amid reports he wants to stay in the U.S. permanently.

Turner said one of the CIA's major accomplishments is the agency's decision to be more open with the media and the public, thus letting the nation's citizens "benefit more from their product and get a return on their investment."

Shevchenko, Arkady
CIA 4 INDIA (Himalayas)
CIA 4 IRAN